

## INSANITY.—NOTE FROM MR. WHITEMAN.

*To the Editor.*—SIR: I have just had my attention directed to your editorial remarks upon the controversy between Mr. Sheppard and myself, and since it has become manifest that invective may take the place of philosophic argument in support of the theory of Mr. Sheppard, I not only applaud your judgment, but most willingly bow to your decision.

You must allow me, however, very briefly to call your attention to a slight mistake into which you have fallen, in supposing me to be either the originator or the promulgator of a theory as to the proximate cause of insanity.

So far from having urged anything against that crude hypothesis, that was not founded upon well-known pathological data, I have been most careful to withhold all speculations of my own, but such as could be borne out, in every respect, by the recorded opinions of the first pathologists of this and other countries. I must also beg to remind you, that it is not to me that belongs that singular theory which repudiates the immediate connexion of the brain with the production of all mental, albeit insane manifestations! I have not asserted anything half so presumptuous as that the symptoms of insanity can have no possible dependence upon disease of the brain! or of recording anything so contradictory as that a "demonstrated problem" means, in the mind of its demonstrator, nothing more than "a theoretical and speculative opinion"!!

If it be a manifestation of ignorance, as your correspondent says it is, (see Mr. Sheppard's letter, *LANCET*, Dec. 28, 1844,) to hold opinions upon insanity in common with such men as Georget, Parchappe, Ferrus, Guislain, Foville, Arnold, Davidson, Armstrong, Haslam, Critchton, Gall, Morison, Burrows, and a host of others of equal authority upon diseases of the mind, then, I must say that I rather rejoice than otherwise at my deficiency of knowledge.

Since the appearance in *THE LANCET*, of the first of the series of lectures of M. Baillarger, and the promise of others upon the same subject from our distinguished countryman, Dr. Conolly, I have less desire than ever to continue the discussion with your correspondent, being quite confident, that as the opinions of these two eminent physicians become developed in your pages, so will the hypothesis which I have combated receive that "heavy blow and great discouragement" which shall at once put an end to the hallucination. I am, Sir, your most obedient servant,

ROBERT H. WHITEMAN.

Hatcham, Kent-road, January 30, 1845.

USE OF THE LIQUOR PLUMBI DIACETATIS  
IN DISEASES OF THE EYE.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—Permit me to appeal to your usual candour, by requesting the insertion of a few remarks on the following passage in your 13th number of *THE LANCET*, December 21st, being part of a review on a work I have lately published, entitled "A Practical Treatise on Diseases of the Eye:"—

"We had thought that every well-informed surgeon was by this time aware of the fact, that when a soluble salt of lead is dropped into the eye, an insoluble white chloride of that metal is immediately formed, which is exceedingly apt to get entangled in any ulceration that may exist on the cornea, giving rise to an indelible white cicatrix; indeed, saturnine preparations of all kinds ought on this account to be banished from ophthalmic surgery."

In a review of the same work in the *British and Foreign Medical Journal* the same observation is made in very similar terms.

In justice to myself, and for the sake of practical surgery, I cannot allow these observations to pass unnoticed in two such influential reviews as your own and Dr. Forbes's;—in justice to myself, because it must seem preposterous that after five-and-twenty years' experience of no ordinary extent, I should gravely recommend the use of a remedy which I have myself had recourse to in many thousands of instances of ulcers of the cornea, strumous ophthalmia, &c. (of which the case, page 120 of my work, is an example,) if its employment had been attended with the serious risks you have described; and for the sake of practical surgery, because I should lament to see a useful remedy entirely abandoned. How often do we find, on mere authority, a useless remedy egregiously extolled, or a valuable one laid aside, regardless of that practical evidence of its worth which is valuable in proportion to the opportunities of testing it.

I will not deny having seen some *very few* examples, similar to those you have described; I believe, nevertheless, that such occurrences would probably never happen with proper precaution. The liquid should be used in a purely limpid state, and the quill, the most convenient instrument for dropping it into the

eye, should be perfectly clean; for if frequently used, and allowed to dry with the solution upon it, an incrustation of lead is formed, which is brittle, and breaks off in small particles: in like manner it forms round the neck of the bottle in which it is contained. Should such particles be floating in the liquid they would be liable to become entangled in an ulcer; it is necessary to obviate this by filtering the liquid, when at all turbid, through blotting-paper. I consider that great precaution is necessary, on the part of the medical attendant, to watch the effects of these drops; should the slightest deposition be observable after any one application, the medicine should be discontinued, otherwise layer after layer of fresh deposition would be decidedly injurious. Dr. Jacobs, in the fifth volume of the "Dublin Hospital Reports," gives some drawings to elucidate the occasional effects both of this application and that of the argenti nitratis; but as compared with anything I have ever witnessed, they are greatly exaggerated. He also states that such results sometimes occur after the *first* application.

With the above precautions I believe that any risk of inconvenience from the use of the solution of lead will be far overbalanced by its advantages, and I can decidedly assert that no permanent or serious injury has been effected by its first application within my own experience.

I cannot conclude without one or two remarks of a more general character. My book was never intended as a text-book for students, and cannot therefore be fairly criticised as such, as it has been by some of my reviewers. I would beg distinctly to state, what I have already done in my Preface, that I have wished to advocate such practical measures as I have myself learnt by long and extensive experience, and to modify the more severe forms of treatment. Difference of opinion I was, of course, prepared to meet with; nor would I for a moment discourteously call into question the authority of my reviewers; but I would claim, in return, courtesy and straightforwardness in opposing my opinions: this, I am happy to say, I have found in *THE LANCET*, and Dr. Forbes's *Journal*, &c.: but there is one medical journal of which, I regret to say, I cannot speak in equally high terms—the *Medico-Chirurgical*. I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

WM. JEAFFRESON.

South Audley-street, Jan. 6, 1845.

## NEWS OF THE WEEK.

## MR. ATTENBURROW'S EMPLOYMENT OF MESMERISM.

*To the Editor.*—SIR: I feel obliged by your insertion of my note of last week in *THE LANCET*. On re-perusing it, I think it may be construed into a denial of my use of mesmerism, and wish such a misunderstanding to be corrected. I have often made use of, and still continue to employ, mesmerism for the removal of severe pain, if the patient wishes, and I deem it advisable, or of probable benefit. Trusting you will give admission to these few words, I am, Sir, yours very truly,

Nottingham, Feb. 12, 1845.

H. C. ATTENBURROW.

\* \* We observed that Mr. Attenburrow did not *deny* that he employed "mesmerism" as an agent in his treatment of disease; but as the statements to which he referred were published without the name of their author, we allowed the note of Mr. Attenburrow to be inserted without editorial comment. Many persons, however, must, as Mr. Attenburrow supposes, have considered that the writer intended to deny his use of "mesmerism" in practice. His present note, therefore, is a very proper appendage to the former communication. Before quitting the subject, however, we think it right to print here the following extract from a letter which accompanied the statement, at page 140, so peremptorily impeached by Mr. Attenburrow:—

"I send you my name, in confidence, with the accompanying communication, and can bear testimony to its correctness, as I had all the facts from a particular friend, who well knows most of the branches of the family, and had them from the relations."

This declaration was supported by the names and addresses of two most respectable gentlemen, on the faith of whose assertion the article was published.

## DEATH OF A SURGEON FROM PRUSSIC ACID.—

A lamentable occurrence took place at Stratton, near Cirencester, on Thursday, the 23rd ult., whereby Mr. Daniel Stuart Holmes, one of the surgeons to the union, came to an untimely end, from accidentally taking an overdose of prussic acid. An inquest was held before Mr. Ball, on Friday. The particulars are as follow:—Mr. Holmes left his house on horseback, on the afternoon of Wednesday, on professional business. At about four, he returned, went into the house, and complained of being much fatigued. After some cheerful conver-